

COUNTY OF YORK

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Daniel M. Stuck



VIRGINIA

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December 19, 2000

Mr. James C. Cleveland
Hampton Roads District Administrator
Virginia Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 1070
Suffolk, VA 23434

Dear Mr. Cleveland:

I am writing to respond to your letter of October 31, 2000 requesting the County to identify its desires for improvements to Route 17 between Route 105 and the Coleman Bridge as well as its desires and priorities for improvements south of Route 105. I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and recommendations and hope that they can be incorporated into planning and budgeting decisions.

First, with respect to the portion of Route 17 north of Route 105, you are aware that the County opposes widening the entire length to six lanes since the level of congestion does not begin to approach that experienced on the southern segments (i.e., south of Route 105). Instead, the County recommends that the project scope be adjusted to widen only the segment between Route 105 and Siege Lane (Route 1249) from four to six lanes. This would extend the six-lane cross section through the commercially zoned areas just north of Route 105 and also would allow safety and congestion issues in the York High School vicinity to be addressed. In addition, the County recommends that appropriate turning improvements/extensions be included at the Goosley Road and Colonial Parkway intersections.

With the savings realized by reducing the project scope as described above, and with other available funds, the County requests that VDOT program and implement improvements to the following segments of Route 17:

- Priority 1 – Poquoson River Bridge: The existing crossing of the Poquoson River (i.e., the spillway of Harwoods Mill Reservoir) represents a constraint to any future widening. The entire culvert/bridge system needs to be rebuilt so that it can accommodate additional travel lanes and shoulders and also be safe from flooding that might occur with a severe storm surge or in the event the reservoir dam is over-topped. This “choke-point” is located in the most severely and frequently congested segment of Route 17 – the area between Route 134 and Route 620 (Lakeside Drive) – and it must be corrected before any lane additions can be undertaken. To accommodate the future widening of segments to the north and south, the County recommends that the alignment of the bridge be shifted slightly to the west (i.e., seeking right-of-way from Newport News Waterworks rather than the commercial properties on the eastern side of the corridor). Since the re-

construction of this bridge is an essential prerequisite to other improvements, the County recommends that it be considered the highest priority.

- Priority 2 – Northbound lanes between Route 134 and Lakeside Drive: This segment of Route 17 experiences severe congestion during most P.M. peak hours. This occurs because of the significant volumes exiting Route 134 trying to merge into the two already congested northbound lanes of Route 17. Further exacerbating the congestion are the traffic signals at Ella Taylor Road (Route 751), Heritage Square, and Lakeside Drive. A third northbound lane would provide additional merging capacity at the Route 134 exit ramp, and would allow greater volumes to flow through the signalized intersections up to Lakeside Drive, where a significant number of vehicles exit Route 17 either onto Lakeside Drive (eastbound) or Oriana Road (westbound). As noted above, the County recommends that the entire corridor alignment be shifted slightly to the west, acquiring any necessary right-of-way from Newport News Waterworks, the principal property owner on the western side.
- Priority 3 – North and southbound lanes between Route 171 and Route 134: This segment should be widened to six lanes in both directions in recognition of existing volumes and the increased volumes that will be present once the WalMart project is completed at the Route 17/Route 171 intersection.
- Priority 4 – Southbound lane between Dare Road (Route 621) and Route 134: This segment experiences significant A.M. peak-hour congestion. Existing business development creates numerous driveway conflict points. An additional southbound lane and paved shoulder would improve traffic flow and turning movements significantly in this area.
- Priority 5 – Northbound lane between Lakeside Drive and Washington Square: Installation of the third lane in this segment would tie into the work currently underway in front of Washington Square and, assuming Priority Nos. 1, 2 and 3 had been accomplished, would provide a continuous three-lane capacity from Route 171 to Wolftrap Road (Route 630).

Again, to reiterate, the County's recommended top priority is the widening of the bridge crossing the Poquoson River since it is a prerequisite to implementing several of the other recommendations. If VDOT does not concur in this recommendation, then our recommended priorities will need to be revised and re-ordered. If that is the case, I trust we will be afforded an opportunity for further discussion and input.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide these recommendations and requests for your consideration. Based on the discussion at our October 24th meeting, it is my understanding that your staff will assess these recommendations from a cost standpoint and report back to us. I realize that the cost of the above-listed priorities will exceed the savings likely to result from the adjusted scope for the project north of Route 105. However, as you might imagine, the County intends to continue seeking reinstatement of some or all of the \$13.3 million in previously "allocated" Route 17 improvement funds with the hope that some or all of that funding can be reinstated and applied to the needed improvements.

I will look forward to your response. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

Mr. James C. Cleveland

December 19, 2000

Page 3

Sincerely,

Daniel M. Stuck
County Administrator

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Attachment

Copy to: York County Board of Supervisors
 The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
 The Honorable Martin E. Williams
 Mr. J. G. Browder, Jr.
 Mr. J. T. Mills
 Mr. R. O. Cassada
 Mr. Quintin D. Elliott